DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 239 123 CE 800 073

AUTHOR Boatright, Joyce; Crowley, Jacquelin
TITLE Marketing to Business and Industry: The Houston Community College System Plan.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the National Adult Education Conference (Philadelphia, PA, November 30-December 3, 1983).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Business; *College Role; Community Colleges; Industry; *Marketing; Merchandising; Needs Assessment; *Occupational Surveys; *Professional Development; Program Descriptions; Program Development; *School Business Relationship; Seminars; Staff Development; Two Year Colleges
IDENTIFIERS PF Project

ABSTRACT

The Sales, Marketing, and Management Division of the Houston Community College System (HCCS) established a task force to identify needs among Houston companies for training/retraining seminars and to determine the role which HCCS should fill in meeting those needs. The task force proposed a marketing study which would meet the following objectives related to HCCS professional development seminars: (1) identify major companies which would be potential users; (2) determine the image of HCCS as a provider; (3) identify specific seminars which have the greatest potential; (4) identify ways to communicate their availability and benefits; and (5) provide a planning framework for future programs. Data from the survey led to a number of conclusions regarding the feasibility of the program and resulted in recommendations on which companies should be targeted; how the promotion should be carried out; and what the pricing policies should be. Future plans involve continuous evaluation of the process and expansion of the number of seminars. The Professional Training and Development Seminars are a valid way to approach new learning opportunities for the adult business community. (DC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED239123

Marketing to Business and Industry: The Houston Community College System Plan

by

Joyce Boatright and Jacquelin Crowley

A Paper Presented at the

1983 National Adult Education Conference

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

November 30 - December 3, 1983

CE800073

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Joyce Boatright

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Marketing to Business and Industry:

The Houston Community College System Plan

Introduction

The Houston Community College System has been operating in Houston since 1971, providing a full spectrum of educational offerings. With 29 locations throughout Houston and the emphasis on affordable, accessible education, HCCS fills a special need as a community agency with capabilities of providing a substantial share of skilled employees for the local economy.

In response to changes in the Houston work environment -- a more mobile society, the demands of more sophisticated technology, the influx of displaced workers in the Houston area -- HCCS is expanding to provide not only entry level occupational training but to make retraining and professional development available to current employees and local industries.

A task force committee was implemented within the Sales, Marketing and Management Division of HCCS to identify needs for continuing education of the greater Houston business/industry community, particularly those which could be met via short-term seminars. The challenge of the task-force was two-fold:

- *to identify the needs among Houston companies for training/ retraining seminars, and*
- *to determine the role which HCCS is best suited to fill in meeting these needs.*

With the hiring of a new Seminar Coordinator, the task became to develop a sound marketing plan so HCCS would be proactive in its efforts to meet the changing needs in the Houston work environment.

Before sharing the process for that plan, it is important to define some terms so that there is clear and mutual understanding of basic concepts.

Marketing management is "the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs in a way that will contribute to high product adoption and high consumer satisfaction" (Kotler, 1975, p. 5). Essentially, then, marketing is the link between a society's needs and its organizational responses (Kotler, 1980). Critics of marketing sometime decry the process as socially unacceptable, warning that marketers are slick-talking hucksters who get people to buy things and services that they don't need. This simply is not true. By definition, a need is "a state of felt deprivation of some generic satisfaction arising out of human conditioning" (Kotler, 1980, p. 19), such as those outlined in Maslow's hierarchy. Apps (1979, p. 118) referred to it as "the gap created when we compare what is and what should be." Wants, on the other hand, are defined by Kotler (1980, p. 19) as "desires for specific satisfiers of needs." Malcolm Knowles (1980, p. 88) conceptualized educational needs as "the discrepancy between what individuals (or organization or society) want themselves to be and what they are; the distance between an aspiration and a reality." Marketing, therefore, does not create needs. Needs pre-exist, and marketing, along with other influentials in society, influences wants by linking needs to a product or service that is responsive to satisfying those needs.

The Process

Houston Community College System found its way into the exchange process (of satisfying wants and needs with responsive programming) through the redevelopment of the Sales, Marketing and Management Division's Seminars Program and external rumblings from the business/industry community. Following a December 1982 mail-out of 13,000 brochures to the Houston membership of the American Management Association, the Seminar Coordinator received five calls from

separate Houston companies asking if HCCS had the capability of providing employer- or company-specific seminars. Conversations with these companies revealed that many larger companies were laying off trainers and that the trainers left were becoming "brokers" for outside providers, because, despite the lay-offs, these same companies still had training needs.

In analyzing the situation, the Seminar Coordinator found that while other units within the college had been working with companies (i.e. a business careers outreach to upgrade downtown clerical employees, a business development outreach to promote HCCS classes in the Galleria suburban area, vocational advisory committees, etc.), no formal marketing research had been implemented to identify the needs of business and industry in a systematic way. Further analysis with the Division Chair, the Dean, the Director of Community Relations, and the task force committee members resulted in a marketing research study being proposed to the President which would meet the following objectives:

1. To identify major companies in the community which could be potential users of professional development seminars.
2. To determine the image of HCCS as a provider of professional development seminars.
3. To identify specific professional development seminars that have the greatest potential for successful marketing by HCCS.
4. To identify ways best to communicate the availability and benefits of HCCS professional development seminars.
5. To provide a planning framework for future programs and promotions of seminars to business/industry.

To provide directional information both for this research study and for future training/industrial interfaces, users of employee training services were identified from among companies in the Houston Community College System District. Using the Harris County Business Guide, which lists all companies

from the telephone white pages and includes other pertinent information (i.e. type of business, size, senior management, etc.), companies which employed 100 people or more were extracted within the following industry groups: service, manufacturing, petroleum, retail, financial, and wholesale. One hundered twenty-seven were then randomly selected for telephone interviews. It was assumed that the primary contacts responsible for purchasing and/or recommending seminars would be training directors and human resources managers, but to ensure the quality of the data received, each respondent in the sample was rigorously screened to determine his/her involvement in employee training decisions. This was a wise decision in retrospect because the actual primary contacts were varied in their titles/departments and fell into no truly dominant category as preconceived.

A questionnaire was developed by the Community Relations Director with direction from a marketing consultant and input from the Seminar Coordinator and Division Chair. The telephone survey was conducted by professional interviewers from a marketing research firm. All potential respondents received a pre-call letter from the firm asking their participation in a study to gather opinions of managerial and employee skills training, along with a letter from the Houston Better Business Bureau identifying the firm as a bona fide marketing research company. Questionnaire pretesting was conducted on July 6 and 7, and telephone interviews were completed from July 8 to July 21, 1983.

In the meantime, the Seminar Coordinator developed a structural framework from within the Sales, Marketing and Management Division to support the internal process for program development, administrative program support, and exploration into additional seminar areas (i.e. public seminars, aimed at individual

professions rather than company-specific, and conferences). Additional personnel were hired for support staff. The Seminar Coordinator and Community Relations Director researched the literature and studied exemplary marketing plans from community colleges around the nation (Daly and Bateman, 1979; Engleberg and Leach, 1981; Eckert, 1979; Young, 1980), while the Supervisor of the Management Program organized a curriculum committee to begin examining content of current seminar offerings, designing models for future use, and evaluating evaluation instruments. Because of the organization of the college system, some seminars are in the instructional domain of other divisions, but flow through the Seminar Coordinator and her staff for implementation and staff support. To facilitate the process, a Procedures Manual was developed. It is a working document, which is being reviewed and will be fully evaluated for its effectiveness in the spring of 1984.

Data from the marketing survey led to the following conclusions:

- *Despite the current recession, Houston's companies are continuing to supply managerial/supervisory training for their employees -- and a significant proportion are looking to outside resources.*
- *No single outside provider dominates the (crowded) field.*
- *Emphasis in companies is on a no-frills approach to achieving bottom-line results. (This orientation should benefit HCCS as we offer a viable alternative to high-priced consultants.)*
- *Financial and petroleum companies are the biggest users of outside sources (but they also are the most heavily connected with consultants).*
- *HCCS should benefit through their affiliation with American Management Association and American Institute of Banking because of their high visibility and reputation in the community.*
- *Although only 5% of those surveyed had actually used HCCS in the past two years, nearly 45% would at least consider the college for basic management and supervisory training. (The prospects are there!)*

. *Basic managerial development needs cut across all categories. The challenge will be to individualize for the particular circumstances within each business/industry.*

. *Customization of seminars to fit individual company's scheduling needs is a priority.*

. *Although all costs are covered by the company, usually up-front for managerial development, cost is not a major factor in choosing a seminar provider.*

. *Direct mail is the most credible of the formal communication tools for reaching company officials. (Newspaper advertising is the least effective.)*

Based on these findings and on discussions with the administrative staff and the task force committee, the following recommendations have been made:

The Product:

1. *Initially, HCCS should concentrate marketing efforts on those companies where the "fit" is best -- where past seminars and training are pertinent.*

2. *After the first year or two, more challenging companies such as retail firms can be targeted.*

The Promotion:

3. *Focusing attention on HCCS's capabilities in two basic areas of management training and professional development will be the most advantageous:*

   . *general management such as motivation, team building, communications, supervision and leadership seminars.*

   . *where experience and expertise are available, interdisciplinary job-specific seminars such as accounting, financial foundations, sales management, and data processing.*

4. *HCCS should capitalize on its reputation for technical training by emphasizing the advantages that familiarity with technical environments offers when communicating supervisory techniques to persons in the technical fields. (This marriage of technical-managerial expertise is especially applicable to the manufacturing sector where first-line supervisors receive the bulk of the training.)*

5. *Redouble public relations efforts to build on the technical image of the college to an image of a capable supplier of Houston's managerial training. Features about contributions of HCCS to companies in managerial development (i.e. Bechtel Engineering, METRO Transit Authority), the high-calibre*

instructors affiliated with the college, the partnership of HCCS with leading Houston firms are possible stories.

6. *HCCS's direct marketing pieces -- brochures and letters -- should be specifically targeted to each industry segment with the following features:*

   . *Past experience - History of providing managerial training in the industry.*

   . *Success stories - Changes in productivity, attitude or employee relations resulting from such training in other firms.*

   . *Credentials - HCCS's trainers with "real-world" work experience, as well as academic training pertinent to the seminars offered.*

   . *Individualization - HCCS's willingness to custom-design seminars to fit industry needs with examples of situations where "fit" was successful.*

7. *Direct mail, especially brochures, should be the first-line marketing tool utilized to build awareness of the college as well as in generating new business. Always include a return postcard to generate leads for follow-up personal calls.*

8. *Personal sales calls should discuss the potential benefits which HCCS can offer in training seminars and to answer any questions about future programming. Representatives making sales calls should have a packet of information about HCCS to supplement information in the brochures to leave with prospects.*

9. *Introduce a quarterly newsletter to Houston business/industry from the HCCS Professional Training and Development. Include news which benefits trainers: a synopsis of the latest book on motivation, a success story about how a company on the local scene handled a bothersome problem, as well as news about HCCS's professional training and development activities and spotlighting on the credentials and experiences of its faculty.*

The Price:

10. *Do not depend on contact hour reimbursement from the State for company-specific seminars. Rather, price them according to extent of services (i.e. pre-assessment, curriculum development, consultation, evaluation, seminar materials, etc.), so that more time may be spent in the all-important development stages.*

11. *Allow for price discounting based on the number of participants.*

12. *Companies equate quality with price, so be aware of competitors' prices and do not price seminars so low that they risk being viewed as inferior in quality.*

13. Be sensitive to the price of time. Schedule effectively.

The Place:

14. Offer options

. On-site if the company has adequate facilities for the kinds of seminars wanted.

. The nearest of the 29 instructional sites that HCCS operates throughout the greater Houston area.

Future Plans

This process has involved continuous evaluation. At this developmental stage, HCCS is constantly refining and adjusting the details of the process. The internal process has yet to be finalized. HCCS is still in the blacksmith's forge. The Sales, Marketing and Management Division plans to build company profiles on current users of HCCS services and add to it prospects. This will help those making sales calls, as well as those developing employer-specific seminars. The Seminar Coordinator and Supervisor of Management Programs plan to implement a "Training the Trainer" as an orientation process for new HCCS personnel who want to be a part of the seminars training group. The promotional materials will be evaluated this spring 1984 by a "focus group" made up of current and prospective company officials customers clients. Plans are being made to survey current students in seminars to compare their views with those expressed by their company officials concerning professional training and development needs.

This year HCCS implemented 120 seminars, more than twice the amount offered in 1982 (from 50 to 120). Now that we have a clear sense of direction, HCCS expects to easily expand to 250 seminars in 1984.

Individual participants' evaluations have been very positive and HCCS expects

those satisfied students to carry the good word back to their organizations. Company response has been favorable thus far in terms of repeat business and in terms of new business created by word-of-mouth recommendations from satisfied customers.

Conclusion

In our minds, this leads to the conclusion that the Professional Training and Development Seminars are a valid way to approach new learning opportunities for the adult business community. We have something professional and constructive to offer the world of work. Our process has been a testimony to the success that can be had if a college pulls together and doesn't fight over turf. Indeed, our effectiveness has been due to the internal cooperation of the Instructional Program Areas (beginning with Sales, Marketing and Management, but crossing divisional lines to Technical Education, Humanities, ESL (in Adult Education), Industrial Education, Business Careers, Data Processing, and Health Careers). Excellent leadership has been provided by the President, his Vice Presidents, the Budgeting Office and other administrative staff. The esprit de corps at HCCS is one of its greatest assets. As we stated in the opening beginning, this has truly been an exchange process. We are looking forward to 1984.

References

Apps, J. W. Problems in continuing education. New York: McGraw McGraw-Hill, 1979.

Daly, R. & Bateman, H. Marketing in a community college. Research 80-81. Santa Ana, California: Santa Ana College, 1979. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 188 652).

Eckert, M.A. The marketing process at Odessa College. Paper presented at the annual convention of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, Chicago, Illinois, April 29-May 2, 1979. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 169 982).

Engleberg, I.N. & Leach, E.R. (Eds.) Prince George's Community College Marketing Plan, 1981-1982. Largo, Maryland: Prince George's Community College, 1981. (ERIC Document Reproduction No. ED 207 625).

Kotler, P. Marketing for nonprofit organizations. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1975.

Kotler, P. Marketing management: Analysis, planning, and control. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1980.

Knowles, M.S. The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy. Chicago, Illinois: Follett Publishing Company, 1980.